3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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sons (*ahɔs*) of the same Tɛnzugu clan. This had brought them together. Similarly, there is a much closer bond between Ziŋgan biis and Tambil biis, two of the five segments of Bɔɣayiedɔt yidɛm of Tongo, than between either of these segments and the other three segments, because their founding ancestors were sister's sons of the same clan.[1]

The other and more important class of kinship ties presupposes the analogy of the parent–child relationship. When a person says of another '*n-dɔɣume*—I have begotten (born) him', or, speaking of lineages, '*ti dɔɣabame*—We (my lineage) have begotten (born) them (their lineage)', what is meant is that the latter can trace a line of descent to the former or to the former's lineage. A man refers to a sister's son (*ahɔŋ*) or to a classificatory *ahɔŋ* in these terms. When I was staying at Kpata'ar, my servants received unusually generous hospitality and were obviously much more at ease than they had been at some places we had previously visited. I was several times told in explanation (on one occasion by some Kpata'ar children) that my two local boys were *dɔɣa* by the Kpata'ar na'ab's lineage. The father of one and the paternal grandfather of the other had been sister's sons of Kpata'ar. Again, two lineages can be related in this way, as, for instance, Nayasaa yidɛm of Kpata'ar and Dmanpiog yidɛm of Gbeog are. The most important feature of such a relationship to the natives is that the lineage or individual of the senior generation sacrifices to their or his ancestors on behalf of the lineage or individual of the junior generation.

The idiom of kinship has such a dominant place in Tale thought that all social relations implying mutual or common interests tend to be assimilated to those of kinship. This happens, as has been shown in our previous volume, with ties of local contiguity and of politico-ritual interdependence between lineages and clans.

The Native Theory of Conception

The Tallensi, we have said, take cognizance of a very wide range of genealogical relationships, and they regard all such relationships as based on the physical fact of consanguinity. The starting-point for this lies in their notions about the physiology of conception. In their view man and woman have equally vital roles in the act of conception. Hence kinship through one's mother, and, consequently, through her ascendants, counts equally with—though admittedly less influentially than, and differently from—kinship through one's father and paternal line.

Dɔɣam is the power of procreation. In women it is connected with menstruation, the external signs and periodicity of which are known to everybody, and the nature of which man, woman, or child readily refers to without the slightest squeamishness. A girl is said to be fit for childbearing (*u saɣa dɔɣam* [*or dɔɣabu*]) when her monthly courses become established, her breasts develop, and her body takes on womanly

[1] Cf. *Dynamics of Clanship*, pp. 211 ff.

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841 contours. Before a woman menstruates (*lu sie*, lit. fall from the waist), and after she ceases altogether to menstruate, she cannot bear children.
842 When a woman has monthly periods she is capable of conception; when she is pregnant her periods stop. Thus menstruation, say the Tallensi, is a condition like pregnancy (*sie a puur*). It is the sign of capacity for child-bearing.

842 A man's *dɔŋam* becomes fruitful some time after puberty (*u solɔme*, verb), the main sign of which is the emergence of pubic hair. At first,
831 when the adolescent boy begins to have nocturnal emissions, his powers of procreation are not yet mature. It is only after some time, when he is completely *sol*, that he becomes capable of procreation. For procreation depends not on the sexual fluids ejaculated in the act of coitus by both man and woman, but on an active principle, as it were, in these fluids, the *ŋaamis*. The natives cannot explain more precisely what the *ŋaamis* is or how it works. What they maintain, emphatically, is that conception, both among men and among animals, cannot occur without sexual congress, and that it depends on the mingling (*gɛrɔm*) of the male sexual fluid with the female sexual fluid, or rather on the happy conjunction of their respective procreative essences (*ŋaamis*). Thus the function of the male is as essential as that of the female in procreation, and every child knows this.

842 Much evidence could be quoted in proof of this. Tallensi know that a male's procreative potency resides in the testicles (*lana*), and they
831 castrate small livestock which they want to prevent from breeding. The suspension of sex relations with a wife who has a nursing child is not a ritual matter, subject to mystical sanctions, but a practical necessity in order to prevent the woman from conceiving again too soon. Its observance is a question of conscience and self-control and few men get through life without a lapse. Some, I was told by one of my most trustworthy informants, practise *coitus interruptus* in order to avoid impregnating a nursing wife. Some men believe in a 'safe period'. I once heard a theory of this kind stated by a man to a couple of friends. His very
[841] modern-sounding theory was that the 'safe period' follows shortly after menstruation, since menstruation is a sort of pregnancy, and a pregnant woman cannot conceive again. But the clearest indication of the role attributed by the Tallensi to sexual conjugation in procreation was given in a conversation I listened to at the Chief of Tongo's house. The chief and the elders were talking about the White Fathers at Bolɔga. Garbled ideas about their doctrines have reached many Tallensi. Jesus was mentioned. One man said that the Fathers claimed that His mother conceived Him without knowing a man. A vigorous argument followed. Most of the men were openly sceptical, saying that it was quite impossible. But one or two had a deeper respect for the white man. True, they admitted, black people cannot have children without sex relations; but perhaps the white man, with his wondrous powers and knowledge,